

DRAMA NOTES

Greek Drama:

1. Performed for special occasions (festivals)

Athens had four festivals worshipping **Dionysus** -- (**Bacchus** in Latin, Roman) god of wine, fertility, rebirth

The son of **Zeus** [a god] and **Semele** [a mortal], reared by satyrs, killed, dismembered, and resurrected (was actually reborn) --

2. Competitive -- prizes awarded

Actors and playwrights competed --*Oedipus* apparently didn't win (was 2nd) -- 430 B.C.

3. Choral -- singing seems to have been an important part

a chorus of men (varied in size from 3 to 50) -- many think the choral song -- *dithyramb*-- was the beginnings of Greek drama (but origins are unclear)

4. Closely associated with religion - stories based on myth or history

Some believe the chorus sang, moved, danced

Most believe the chorus underscored the ideas of the play, provided point-of-view, and focused on issues of the play and implications of the action, established the play's ethical system, and participated in the action

The Greek Tragedy

Structure of Greek Tragedy:

1. Late point of attack
2. Violence and death offstage (Sophocles's *Ajax* is an exception)
3. Frequent use of messengers to relate information
4. Usually continuous time of action (except Aeschylus's *Eumenides*)
5. Usually single place (except *Ajax*)
6. Stories based on myth or history, but varied interpretations of events
7. Focus is on psychological and ethical attributes of characters, rather than physical and sociological.

"The Artists of Dionysus" seem to have been a sort of actors' union in the 3rd century B.C.

The Three Greek Tragedians:

1. **Aeschylus** - his are the oldest surviving plays - began competing 449 at Dionysus Theatre. Most of his plays were part of trilogies; the only extant Greek trilogy is *The Orestia*.

He is believed to have introduced the 2nd actor (Thespis was one, the 2nd added; after 468 Sophocles is believed to have introduced the 3rd actor, which Aeschylus then used.

Characteristics of Aeschylus's plays:

- characters have limited number of traits, but clear and direct
- emphasizes forces beyond human control
- evolution of justice, impersonal
- power of state eventually replacing personal revenge
- chain of private guilt and punishment - all reconciled at end

2. **Sophocles: (496-406 B.C.)** won 24 contests, never lower than 2nd; believed to have introduced the 3rd actor; fixed the chorus at 15 (had been 50)

Characteristics of Sophocles' plays:

- emphasis on individual characters
- reduced role of chorus
- complex characters, psychologically well-motivated
- characters subjected to crisis leading to suffering and self-recognition - including a higher law above man
- exposition carefully motivated
- scenes suspensefully climactic
- action clear and logical
- poetry clear and beautiful
- few elaborate visual effects
- theme emphasized: the choices of people

3. **Euripides (480-406 B.C.)** very popular in later Greek times, little appreciated during his life sometimes known as "the father of melodrama"

Characteristics of Euripides' plays:

- dealt with subjects usually considered unsuited to the stage which questioned traditional values (Medea loving her stepson, Medea murdering her children)
- dramatic method often unclear -not always clearly causally related episodes, with many reversals, deus ex machina endings
- many practices were to become popular: using minor myths or severely altered major ones
- less poetic language, realistic characterizations and dialog

Tragedy was abandoned in favor of melodramatic treatment.

Theme emphasized: sometimes chance rules world, people are more concerned with morals than gods are.

Greek Comedy

- not admitted to Dionysus festival till 487-486 B.C. - late
- unknown origins or influences
- perhaps from improvisations of leaders of phallic songs
- or from mime - satirical treatment of domestic situations or burlesqued myths
- 6 comic dramatists besides Aristophanes (his is the only extant work)
- Called "Old Comedy"
- commentary on contemporary society, politics, literature, and Peloponnesian War.
- Based on a "happy idea" - a private peace with a warring power or a sex strike to stop war
- exaggerated, farcical, sensual pleasures

Structure of the Comedy:

Part One:

prolog - chorus gives debate or "*agon*" over merits of the ideas

parabasis - a choral ode addressing the audience, in which a social or political problem is discussed

Part Two:

scenes show the result of the happy idea final scene: (**komos**) - all reconcile and exit to feast or revelry in 404 B.C., Athens was defeated in the Peloponnesian War; social and political satire declines.
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Production / Finance:

Playwrights applied to the *archon* (religious leader) for a chorus.

Expense borne by a *choregai*, wealthy citizen chosen by the archon as part of civic / religious duty

Choregus paid for training, costuming, etc. (tho' term *choregus* also refers to leader of the chorus.

The State responsible for theatre buildings, prizes, payments to actors (and perhaps to playwrights). Prizes were awarded jointly to playwrights and choregus.

Dramatists themselves probably "directed" the tragic plays, but probably not the comedies.

Aeschylus and others in his time acted, trained chorus, wrote music, choreographed, etc.

Playwrights called *didaskalos* (teacher) -- [*didactic* = teaching].

Actors and Acting:

Tragedy:

Playwrights originally acted, but by 449 B.C. with the contests for tragic actors, they didn't.

Actors were semi-professional, at best.

Three-actor rule (that only three actors were in productions) - seems supported by evidence, but questioned by some.

Oedipus at Colonus - could have only three actors, but only if a different actor played the same character in different scenes.

Comedy:

Fewer restrictions

Playwrights cast till 449, with the advent of the contests, then the main actors were chosen by lot and the others by the main actors and the playwright.

Actors were paid by the State.

Only the leading actors were eligible for competition.

A vocal acting - declamatory - to project appropriate emotional tone, mood, and character.

Three kinds of delivery: speech, recitative, and song.

No facial importance - masks used.

Gesture and movement were broadened and simplified.

Acting styles:

Actors usually played more than one role

Men played all the parts

Stylized - used masks, choral declamation, etc.

Tragedy leaned toward idealization; comedy toward burlesque.

Other elements affecting 5th century Greek productions:

The chorus - tragedies

dominant in early tragedies (so main actors could change roles ?)

by Euripides, chorus only loosely related to the action

Size:

traditional view : from 50 to 12 to 15.

Generally believed to be 15 by the time of Sophocles and Euripides.

Later diminished in time.

Entered with stately march, sometimes singing or in small groups.

Choral passages sung and danced in unison, sometimes divided into two groups.

Sometimes exchanged dialog with the main characters, rarely individual speaking (though some say the *choregus* may have spoken / sung alone).

The type of groupings are unknown.

Roman Theatre

Borrowed Greek ideas and improved (?) on them

Less philosophical

Encompassed more than drama : acrobatics, gladiators, jugglers, athletics, chariots races, *naumachia* (sea battles), boxing, venationes (animal fights)

Entertainment tended to be grandiose, sentimental, diversionary

Actors / performers were called "*histriones*"

Three major influences on Roman theatre:

1. Greek Drama
2. Etruscan influences – emphasized circus-like elements
3. Fabula Atellana – Atellan farces (Atella was near Naples).

Short improvised farces, with stock characters, similar costumes and masks – based on domestic life or mythology – burlesqued, parodied – during the 1st century B.C., then declined

May have influenced *commedia dell'Arte*

Stock characters:

Bucco: braggart, boisterous

Pappas: foolish old man

Dossenus: swindler, drunk, hunchback

Drama flourished under the republic but declined into variety entertainment under the empire {Top of Page}

Roman festivals:

Held in honor of the gods, but much less religious than in Greece.

Ludi Romani – (207) -- 6th century B.C.

Became theatrical in 364 B.C.

Held in September (the autumn) and honored Jupiter.

By 240 B.C., both comedy and tragedy were performed.

Five others: Ludi Florales (April), Plebeii (November), Apollinares (July), Megalenses (April), Cereales (no particular season).

Under the empire, these festivals afforded "bread and circuses" to the masses – many performances.

Performances at festivals probably paid for by the state a wealthy citizen, had free admission, were lengthy—including a series of plays or events, and probably had prizes awarded to those who put extra money in.

Acting troupes (perhaps several a day) put on theatre events.

Forms of Roman Theatre

Roman Drama – there are only about 200 years that are important:

Livius Andronicus – 240 – 204 B.C. – wrote, translated, or adapted comedies and tragedies, the first important works in Latin. Little is known, but he seems to have been best at tragedy.

Gnaeus Naevius – 270-201 B.C. excelled at comedy, but wrote both

Both helped to "Romanize" the drama by introducing Roman allusions into the Greek originals and using Roman stories.

Comedy and Tragedy followed different paths.

Roman Theatre Design– Buildings (212-213)

First permanent Roman theatre built 54 A.D. (100 years after the last surviving comedy)
So permanent structures, like Greece, came from periods after significant writing
More than 100 permanent theatre structures by 550 A.D.

General characteristics:

Built on level ground with stadium-style seating (audience raised)

Skene becomes *scaena* – joined with audience to form one architectural unit (213)

Paradoi become *vomitorium* into orchestra and audience

Orchestra becomes half-circle

Stage raised to five feet

Stages were large – 20-40 feet deep, 100-300 feet long, could seat 10-15,000 people

3-5 doors in rear wall and at least one in the wings

scaena frons – façade of the stage house – had columns, niches, porticoes, statues – painted stage was covered with a roof

dressing rooms in side wings

trap doors were common

awning over the audience to protect them from the sun,

during the empire around 78 B.C., cooling system – air blowing over streams of water

area in front of the *scaena* called the *proskene* (proscenium)

125 permanent theatres built during the empire.

Elizabethan Theatres

Two kinds:

- Outdoor or "public"
- Indoor or "private"

Both were open to anyone who could pay, but the private theatres cost more, were smaller, and had a more select audience.

Nine Public playhouses were built between 1576 and 1642. The three most important – were all outside the city limits of London:

The Globe (1599)

The Fortune (1600)

The Swan (?)

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General features of public playhouses:

- Varied in size – largest seated 2-3,000.
- Varying shapes: round, rectangular, octagonal
- Had a "pit" or "**yard**" – where the "**groundlings**" were – un-roofed space, surrounding the stage on three sides, enclosed by three tiers of roofed **galleries**. The yard cost less (general admission), the Gallery cost more. There were probably some private galleries.
- The stage was raised, 4-6 feet, extending to the center of the yard.
- A "**Tiring house**" at the rear of the raised platform – where the actors would wait and change.
- The stage was roofed – called "**the heavens**"—supported by columns. Flying was common, with cranes and ropes.
- Traps in the floor, for fire, smoke, other effects.
- Two doors in the tiring house—represented widely different locations (France or England, for instance).
- A hut above the Tiring House, for equipment and machinery.
- Flag on top of hut – to signal performance day.
- Musicians' gallery, below hut, third level.
- Perhaps: Two playing levels, upper and lower; maybe a third. Audience may have sat on 2nd level..
- Perhaps: a discovery space (probably between the two doors, portable or permanent, 1 or 3 curtains thrusting out.

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Indoor / Private Theatres

Less is known about the Elizabethan indoor theatres.

- Smaller, roofed.
- Troupes did shows in winter when it was too cold to be outside – suggesting that the staging was probably similar.

- 1576 – Blackfriar’s – a former monastery – was the first one – closed by 1584.
- The New Blackfriar’s opened in 1596 by James Burbage. Their company, the King’s Men, used it after 1610 as their winter performance area.
- Children’s troupes had been popular for a while until 1610.
- By the time of Shakespeare (1595?), actors had achieved a satisfactory level of financial and social stability.
- By 1642, there were six private theatres in London.
- Private theatre rose in popularity from 1610 to 1642. Public theatres were used only during the five warm months.
- Size: about ¼ - ½ of the seating capacity of the public theatres.
- Spectators sat in the pit or in galleries or private boxes. The stages were probably similar.

Acting Troupes:

Most troupes worked on a sharing plan – risk and profits shared. Democratic, self-governing,

Some troupes or members of troupes owned theatre buildings—they were know as "householders."

Stagehands hired "hirelings" for a salary.

Troupes were all male, men or young boys playing women’s roles, some specialized in particular types of roles.

Richard Tarleton, William Kemp, and Robert Armin – clowns

Richard Burbage, Edward Alleyn – tragedians.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Between 1590 and 1613, he wrote 38 plays (although, for some, the authorship is still in doubt), some written with others (John Fletcher, for instance).

Histories: (English history, like Marlowe’s Chronicle plays) such as *Henry IV, V, VI, VIII, Richard II, Richard III*

Tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet, Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth* – generally considered to be his greatest works

Comedies: *Twelfth Night, As You Like It, Comedy of Errors*

Little known about his life:

- Actor and shareholder in Lord Chamberlain’s Company (Later the King’s Men) by 1595.
- After 1599, a shareholder at the Globe Theatre.
- Actor, playwright, and sometimes director.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries:

General characteristics of the plays:

1. Early point of attack

2. Several lines of action (subplots), independent at first, then somehow merge together – unity in apparent diversity (*King Lear* is a perfect example).
3. Large number and variety of incidents; mixing of tears and laughter; gentle and violent passions
4. Time and space used freely – a sense of ongoing life behind the scenes
5. Large range and number of characters; 30 is common; rich and poor, all individuals.
6. Varied language: elegant, ribald, witty, prosaic; all to enhance character and action
7. Subjects from many sources (mythology, history, legend, fiction, plays) but reworked to become his own.

A fluid and flexible production style is needed:

Small props, small set pieces maybe

Costumes important – they were usually contemporary, except for supernatural characters and conventional costumes (for Turks, Spaniards, animals), and with the addition of drapery to suggest periods (Romans wearing toga-like sash).

Shakespeare's plays seem to be accepted as the most dramatically effective – he attempted all popular forms and subjects.

But his reputation during his lifetime was lower than Jonson or Fletcher of Beaumont. His fame grew in the late 17th century and reached its peak in the 19th. Has leveled now.

Survival of his plays depended on fellow actors (i.e.: Henry Condell and John Heminges) – Original edition of his plays was in 1623, called the First Folio.

His four greatest tragedies: *Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Othello*

Shakespeare's Contemporaries:

Ben Jonson (1572-1637): Considered the best after Shakespeare, but thought he was better.

Perhaps the most influential of his time.

An actor turned playwright.

Followed "the rules" more, but altered them.

Wrote many "masques"—more than anyone else.

In 1616 was made England's "poet laureate."

In 1616, his plays were published – something usually reserved for poets.

His plays were limited in scope: purpose to reform human behavior, concentrated on foibles of contemporary types.

More harshly moralistic than Shakespeare.

Called "comedy of humors"—

The four bodily "humors" – since classical times, the four humors – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile – health was thought to depend on them—extended in Elizabethan times to human psychology – the eccentricities of human behavior attributed to them.

Jonson wrote mostly comedies such as *Every Man in his Humor* (1598.)

His two tragedies *Valpone* (1606) and *The Alchemist* (1610), were respected, but popular failures.

Background

Realism in the last half of the 19th-century began as an experiment to make theater more useful to society. The mainstream theatre from 1859 to 1900 was still bound up in melodramas, spectacle plays (disasters, etc.), comic operas, and vaudevilles.

But political events—including attempts to reform some political systems—led to some different ways of thinking. Revolutions in Europe in 1848 showed that there was a desire for political, social, and economic reform. The many governments were frightened into promising change, but most didn't implement changes after the violence ended.

Technological advances were also encouraged by industry and trade, leading to an increased belief that science could solve human problems. But the working classes still had to fight for every increase in rights: unionization and strikes became the principal weapons workers would use after the 1860s—but success came only from costly work stoppages and violence. In other words there seems to be rejection of Romantic idealism; pragmatism reigned instead. The common man seemed to feel that he needed to be recognized, and people asserted themselves through action.

The Emergence of Realism

3 major developments helped lead to the emergence of realism:

1. **August Comte (1798-1857)**, often considered to be the "father of Sociology," developed a theory known as Positivism. Among the Comte's ideas was an encouragement for understanding the cause and effect of nature through precise observation.
2. **Charles Darwin** published *The Origin of Species* in 1859, and created a worldwide stir which exists to this day. Darwin's essential series suggested that life developed gradually from common ancestry and that life favored "survival of the fittest." The implications of Darwin's Theories were threefold:
 1. people were controlled by heredity and environment
 2. behaviors were beyond our control
 3. humanity is a natural object, rather than being above all else
3. **Karl Marx (1818-1883)** in the late 1840's espoused a political philosophy arguing against urbanization and in favor of a more equal distribution of wealth

These three stated ideas that helped open the door for a type of theatre that would be different from any that had come before.

Even Richard Wagner (pronounced "Rih-Kard' Vahg'-ner") (1813-1883), while rejecting contemporary trends toward realism, helps lead toward a moderate realistic theatre. Wagner wanted complete illusionism, but wanted the dramatists to be more than a recorder—he wanted to be of "myth-maker."

True drama, according to Wagner, should be "dipped in the magic founding of music," which allows greater control over performance than spoken drama. Wagner wanted complete control over every aspect of the production in order to get a "*gesamtkunstwerk*," or "master art work."

Because Wagner aimed for complete illusion, even though his operas were not all realistic, many of his production practices helped lead the way for realism. For instance the auditorium was darkened, the stage was framed with a double proscenium arch, there were no side boxes and no center aisle, and all seats were equally good. Further, he forbade musicians to tune in the orchestra pit, allowed no applause or curtain calls, and strove for historical accuracy in scenery and costumes. Therefore, even though Wagner's operas are fantastic and mythical, his attempts at illusionism helped gain public acceptance for realism.

Beginnings of the Movement:

Realism came about partly as a response to these new social / artistic conditions. The "movement" began in France and by 1860 had some general precepts:

1. truth resides in material objects we perceived to all five senses; truth is verified through science
2. the scientific method—observation—would solve everything
3. human problems were the highest were home of science

Art—according to the realist view—had as its purpose to better mankind.

Drama was to involve the direct observation of human behavior; therefore, the trust to use contemporary settings and time periods, and it was to deal with a temporary life and problems has subjects.

As already mentioned, realism first showed itself in staging and costuming. Three-dimensional details had been added by 1800. By 1850, theater productions years historically accurate settings and constant and details, partly as a result of romantic ideals. But it was harder to get realism accepted widely.

The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen helped unify productions; Richard Wagner wanted theatre to fuse the emotional and the intellectual, though his operas were highly mythical and fantastic.

Writers of Realism

In France, to Playwrights helped popularized the idea of realism but both clung to two inherent traditional morality and values:

Alexandre Dumas fils (the *fils* stands for "son," and designates the "illegitimate son of Alexandre Dumas") – (1824-1895)

His novel, *Camille*, was dramatized in 1849. About a "kept woman," the play was written in prose, and dealt with contemporary life. Eventually, he wrote "thesis plays," about contemporary social problems.

Emile Augier (1820-1889) also wrote plays about contemporary conditions.

In Norway: **Henrik Ibsen** (1828-1906) is considered to be the father of modern realistic drama. His plays attacked society's values and dealt with unconventional subjects within the form of the well-made play (causally related).

Ibsen perfected the well-made play formula; and by using a familiar formula made his plays, with a very shocking subject matter, acceptable. He discarded soliloquies, asides, etc. Exposition in the plays was

motivated, there were causally related scenes, inner psychological motivation was emphasized, the environment had an influence on characters' personalities, and all the things characters did and all of things the characters used revealed their socio-economic milieu. He became a model for later realistic writers.

Among the subjects addressed by Ibsen in his plays are: *euthanasia, the role of women, war and business, and syphilis*.

Some of Ibsen's Plays:

- *Ghosts*—1881—dealt with the concept of the sins of the father transferring to the son, resulting in syphilis.
- *Pillars of Society* – 1877 – dealt with war and business.
- *Hedda Gabler* – 1890 – a powerful woman takes her life at the end of the play to get away from her boredom with society.
- *A Doll's House* – 1879 – Nora leaves her husband Torvald and her children at the end of the play; often considered "the slam heard around the world," Nora's action must have been very shocking to the Victorian audience.

Later in life, Ibsen turned to more symbolic and abstract dramas; but his "realism" affected others, and helped lead to realistic theatre, which has become, despite variations and rejections against it, the predominant form of theatre even today.

Other writers of realism:

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) – in England

Uncommon for his witty humor

Made fun of societies notion using for the purpose of educating and changing. His plays tended to show the accepted attitude, then demolished that attitude while showing his own solutions.

- *Arms and the Man* (1894) – about love and war and honor.
- *Mrs. Warren's Profession* – prostitution.
- *Major Barbara* (1905) – a munitions manufacturer gives more to the world (jobs, etc.) while the Salvation Army only prolongs of the status quo.
- *Pygmalion* (1913) – shows the transforming of a flower girl into a society woman, and exposes the phoniness of society. The musical *My Fair Lady* was based on this play.

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) – in Russia

Chekhov is known more for poetic expiration and symbolism, compelling psychological reality, people trapped in social situations, hope in hopeless situations. He claimed that he wrote comedies; others think they are sad and tragic. Characters in Chekhov's plays seem to have a fate that is a direct result of what they are. His plays have an illusion of plotlessness.

- *The Seagull* (1898).
- *Three Sisters* (1900) – we did the show here last year; about three sisters who want to move to Moscow but never do.
- *The Cherry Orchard* (1902)

Again, his realism has affected other Playwrights, as did his symbolic meanings in the texts of his plays and in the titles of his plays.

Other Movements

Two other "movements" that developed concurrently with realism warrant our attention, *Naturalism* and the *Independent Theatre Movement*. Each of these had an influence on the developing realist movement.

Naturalism

While Ibsen was perfecting realism, France was demanding a new drama based on Darwinism:

1. all forms of life developed gradually from common ancestry,
2. evolution of species is explained by survival of the fittest

The implications of Darwin's ideas seemed to be that 1) heredity and environment control people; 2) no person is responsible, since forces are beyond control; 3) the must go to society; 4) progress is the same as improvement/evolution; it is inevitable and can be hastened by the application of the scientific method; 5) man is reduced to a natural object.

France had been defeated in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, ending Napoleon III's empire, and making France a Republic. Attitudes shifted: the working man had few privileges, it appeared, and socialism gained support. By 1900, every major country in Europe had a Constitution (except Russia); there was therefore a strong interest in the plight of the working class. Science and technology became major tools for dealing with contemporary problems.

Naturalism became a conscious movement in France in the 1870's; Emile Zola (1849-1902) was an admirer of Comte and an advocate of the scientific method. Literature, he felt, must become scientific or perish; it should illustrate the inevitable laws of heredity and environment or record case studies. To experiment with the same detachment as a scientist, the writer could become like a doctor (seeking the cause of disease to cure it, bringing the disease in the open to be examined), aiming to cure social ills.

Zola's first major statement came in a novel, *Thérèse Raquin*, which was dramatized in 1873; his preface states his views. He also wrote a few treatises about naturalism in the theatre and in the novel: he wanted art to detect "a scrap of an existence."

Even though *Thérèse Raquin* failed to adhere to most of the principles of naturalism, except in the setting (it was mostly a melodrama about murder and retribution), his followers were even more zealous. The most famous phrase we hear about naturalism is that it should be "a slice of life." We often tend to forget what a later French writer stated should be included with that phrase: "... put on the stage with art."

Naturalism, as it was interpreted, almost obliterated the distinction between life and art. As you can imagine, there is a serious lack of good naturalistic plays and embodying its principles, has it is virtually impossible to do. Henri Becque (1837-1899) most nearly captured the essence of naturalism in two of his plays, *The Vultures* (1882) and *La Parisienne* (1885), both of which it dealt with sordid subjects, were pessimistic and cynical, had no obvious climaxes, had no sympathetic characters, and progressed slowly to the end. However, Becque refused to comply with suggested changes when the show was first produced in a conservative theatre, so naturalism was still not really accepted.

The Independent Theatre Movement

It would take André Antoine and the Théâtre Libre – the beginnings of the Independent Theatre Movement – to make naturalism and realism more acceptable.

Antoine (1858-1943) has become known as the father of naturalistic staging. He had little acting or theatre Experience—he was a clerk in a gas Co. and work in an Archer theatre—and when he wanted to produce a dramatization of a Zola novel, the amateur groups refused.

So he founded the Théâtre Libre (Free Theatre), first program was a success and by the end of 1887 he was famous, and worked in the theatre till 1914. The Théâtre Libre used a subscription basis—productions were open only two members—so his theatre was exempt from censorship. His theatre did many plays that had been refused licenses other places (for instance, *Ghosts* had been banned in much of Europe). While some of the plays tended to reverse morality—repelling many and helping to lead to the idea that naturalism was depraved—key paved the way for greater freedom in established theatres. The Théâtre Libre also began producing at least one foreign work per year, introducing a world theatre to France.

Antoine's production techniques were innovative. He had seen the Meiningen troupe and was influenced to produce authenticity: real beef carcasses hanging on stage; the "box set" was used so that "the fourth wall" was adhered to constantly (he popularize the terms and the ideas—legend has it that he arranged rooms as they would be, and then later decided what wall to "remove"); he discouraged declamation in favor of more natural acting; replaced footlights with more natural lighting; emphasized ensemble acting; and adhered to his belief that each play had its own environment.

Antoine had many problems: as actors became well-known, they left the company; his high standards left him always in debt; and his theatre did only three performances of any production. By 1894, he left the Théâtre Libre.

Eventually, he opened the Théâtre Antoine in Paris in 1897, all fully professional company, and then later became the director of all fully-modernized state-subsidized theatre. His influence was undeniable in helping the acceptance of realism/naturalism and in the development of the independent theatre movement.

The Independent Theatre Movement developed in other countries as well. For instance, in Germany, many small theatres had opened up buying 1890 in Berlin, but were severely limited by censorship in their choice of plays. Most had been influenced by the Meiningen troupe—some advocated realism, while others advocated severe naturalism. But these theatres lacked focus until the development of the Independent Theatre Movement.

The Freie Bühne (Free Stage) was founded in Berlin and 1889. Unlike Antoine's theatre, the Freie Bühne was democratically organized, with officers and a governing council. Otto Brahm (1856-1912), a drama critic, became president and guided the group. They gave performances on Sunday afternoons (so that professional actors could be in them), had different performers in each production, and exercised much less control over the theatrical productions. Its major contribution was performing censored plays. The theatre dissolved in 1894, and Brahm was named head of the Deutches theatre.

The Freie Volksbühne (People's Theatre) was organized by socialist workers in 1890 after a ban on such organizations had been lifted. Using the Freie Bühne as it its model it produced plays on Sunday afternoons and sold its tickets keep.

Shortly after that, another similar theatre was formed; both groups merged before World War I, and had a combined membership of 70,000. The Workers Theatre Movement flourished in Germany and Austria, and built a broad-based theatre audience.

The Six Elements of a Tragedy / Play present in all plays, but some standard forms can be discerned.

Verisimilitude -- the "illusion of truth" -- the method of achieving it changes.

Form: the shape given to something so it may serve a useful purpose.

For our purposes: **form / genre / types** are intended to be categories that are not firm--there are endless sub-categories, and many plays will fit into a number of different categories simultaneously.

It can become dangerous to evaluate a play as one form, when it might not indeed fit that form.

Genre--(135) -- French for "category" or "type" -- sharing a particular point of view/ forming a group.

Genre criticism --can show how a play does or does not fit into a particular category, but can also be useful as a way of examining the plays and discovering more about them -- as a learning tool.

Such categories as "**dramedy**," "**tragic farce**," etc. have been used to show the merging of "types."

Shakespeare's Polonius in *Hamlet* ridiculed categorical obsessions: "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral." (Act II, scene ii).

Tragedy (136-142)

1. Origins of Tragedy:

- "**tragos**" + "**oide**" -- goat song usually involves a calamity (death, etc.), but attention is focused on what reactions are to that calamity by the characters and what those reactions can tell us about life.
- The "**dithyramb**" -- hymns sung and danced in honor of Dionysus (367, 193).
- Usually about the struggles of the "protagonist", moral issues, the effects of suffering.
- Struggle is ethical, spiritual -- protagonist's integrity is tested.
- Tragedy raises questions about the meaning of human existence, moral nature, and social / psychological relationships.
- Aristotle suggested a "**certain magnitude**."
- Evil often shown along with good, which does not always win.
- Some tragedies (Greek) like *Oedipus*, suggest that the protagonist has violated some moral order which must be vindicated and reestablished.
- Often seems inevitable and predetermined (we can look and decide for ourselves later).

Magnitude: characters have high stature -- ethically superior but sufficiently imperfect

modern tragedies -- more common characteristics (Willy LOMAN).

High seriousness: Tries to arouse (effect) proper purgation of pity and fear -- [some have asked if the purgation is to be in the audience or in the characters??]

"**Catharsis**" -- a purification -- the compassion accompanying shared grief -- a humanizing force-- we return to a state of equilibrium after release of tensions (366).

(141) -- Contradictory reactions -- pessimistic, yet not willing to surrender individuality.
a form of victory..

The Tragic Hero (protagonist) has a flaw in character or makes an error in judgment -- "**tragic flaw**" (140, 371) -- **hamartia** -- literally "missing the mark" (368).

"**hubris**" -- a characteristic -- overweening pride or self-confidence (368).

Aristotle suggests that the best plays (*Oedipus*) have the hubris being too much of a good thing (what makes Oedipus strong is his self-confidence and pride)

Universality -- Universal human values -- When a play touches something that is human in all of us and has lasting value through time

"Komos" -- Greek -- revelry at end of comedies based on some deviation from normality in action, character, thought, or speech "in fun" (tho' can still have serious purpose)

Henri Bergson (1917) "On Laughter." -- "anesthesia of the heart" --audiences view objectively -- the banana peel fall is funny, as long as it is not us and if not hurt (cartoons).

Aristotle's book of comedy, if there was one ever, is not extant. In tragedy, people are better than they really are; in comedy, people are worse than they really are.

Often: if a happy ending, therefore a comedy. A kind of catharsis through laughter and amusement -- helps remind us of our frailties and helps keep us sane.

Wilson, p. 200 -- **Characteristics of comedy** -- a way of looking at the world in which basic values are asserted but natural laws suspended -- to underscore human follies and foolishness -- sometimes wry, rueful, hilarious.

- suspension of natural laws
- contrast between social order and individual
- comic premise:

the idea or concept that turns the accepted notion of things upside down and makes it the basis of the play -- provides structural and thematic unity and can be a springboard for comic dialog, characters, and situations.

involves exaggeration and incongruity and contradictions--

Incongruity -- illogical, out of place surprise.

Comic techniques

verbal humor

puns

malapropisms-- misusing wrong words in such a way that they sound similar but usually are strikingly different from the word intended.

The Rugrats, for example, use a number of malapropisms: Angelica said once that there was a "whole world to deplore" out there (the best are like this--the word sounds similar but means something strikingly different).

Kinds of Comedy: "High" and "Low"

1. **Farce**: often considered a separate form (Plautus, *Charley's Aunt*).

often considered to be "low comedy" (versus "high comedy").

physical comedy : "slapstick" -- physical action provokes the thought.

Very high incongruity (surprise, something out of place or unexpected).

Comedy of situation, but extreme incongruity -- buffoonery, accidents, mistaken identities, ludicrous situations.

2. **Burlesques**-- lampooning other works of art, including theatre pieces.

3. **Satire** -- ridicule of public institutions and figures.

4. **Domestic Comedy** --home and hearth.

5. **Comedy of Manners** / Wit: similar to character and situation aristocratic and witty characters .

6. **Comedy of Ideas**

7. Romantic comedy-- struggles of love, sympathetic characters, ludicrous devices lovers use
Midsummer, 12th Night)

Other Serious forms:

A. Heroic Drama (146)

Retains parts of tragedy --

heroic or noble characters

verse (**heroic verse**) -- where the kind of drama got its name -- heroic verse consists of "couplets" -- two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter -- and other elevated language

extreme situations

but differs from tragedy because:

usually has a happy ending

generally optimistic view, even if ending is sad

B. Tragi-Comedy.

More complex than melodrama.

Ends happily, but raises complex issues of love, friendship, cowardice, courage, and death; societal norms, morality concealed identities, misinformation, and coincidence, last-minute revelations.

Many modern plays called tragi-comedy.

Able to send conflicting messages: laugh, but situation and ending can still be disquieting (*MASH*, *Bonnie and Clyde*)

Two playwrights that W/G mention (349) as having roots in alternative theatre, David Mamet and Sam Shepard, have often been called "super-realism," "extra-realism," "magic realism."

This is indicative of modern times --
Uncertainty about nature of things and beliefs